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LETTER DATED 24 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward to you a press release issued on 24 June 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the attached press release circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Press release issued on 24 June 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea

Eritrea's position regarding the recent Security Council statement

The Security Council issued a statement on 23 June 1999, in which the Council demands, inter alia, that "both parties immediately and unconditionally agree to a ceasefire". The Council further calls upon both parties "to cooperate fully and constructively with the high-level delegation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to implement the framework agreement".

While the Government of Eritrea welcomes these recommendations, it cannot but emphasize the following points:

1. It is well known that Eritrea did not initiate the hostilities. Moreover, not only has Eritrea publicly committed itself not to shoot the first bullet but it has incessantly been calling for the renunciation of the use of force to resolve the border problem and for a comprehensive cessation of hostilities. Clearly, this measure, which constitutes the first paragraph of the Framework Agreement, is vital to pave the way for the full implementation of the multifaceted provisions of the Agreement. The only reason that it remains blocked is Ethiopia's adamant rejection. Only recently, Ethiopia's Prime Minister told his domestic audience in a lengthy interview on Ethiopian television and radio that the "impending offensive will neither be brought forward or delayed by a day. It will be launched at the most appropriate time. Time 'lost' is simply to ensure full preparations". The Security Council must therefore address its demand and measures for non-compliance to Ethiopia rather than blaming both parties without distinction.

2. Eritrea has repeatedly announced its readiness to implement the OAU Framework Agreement in good faith. Again, the obstacle remains Ethiopia, which has been forwarding ever-changing preconditions. Eritrea objects to these preconditions, and vehemently calls for the implementation of the Framework Agreement without any alterations to appease Ethiopia's unacceptable preconditions and new demands.